

NEWSLETTER (11) – AUG 04.... From KIM in Cambodia xxx

Hello everyone...its that time again, another month over and time for me to put thoughts into my computer again!!! This letter business is harder than I thought, as I constantly forget what I said and to who I said it! I try to write the newsletter each month, plus write individually to some lucky ones, and a fair amount of \$'s are spent in text messages, all of which keep me happy, but somewhat confused at times!! - now I realize that some of you may be utterly confused too. So I will try to capture the essence of the last 10 months... I arrived, and liked it immediately. At work - I met staff, went out to the 10 health centers, stayed in several remote villages, learnt to ride a motorbike, had lots of Khmer lessons and attended several meetings and courses in Phnom Penh. Socially, I hit it off well with Judi and spend most evenings with her (lives next door), we exercised at first (6 nights a week), now we exercise about once a week, I have other friends - Rani and Seven are two school teachers who help me with Khmer on Tues & Thurs nights. I have an amazing DVD and CD collection, so watch films and listen to music most nights, On average there is at least one party a month - various reasons (or excuses?). I can dance Khmer now (in a fashion anyway) I had a pet - George the rabbit, but after several months of attacking me, it attacked itself, so I let it free into the forest. Psychologically - Well! I am quite happy here, sometimes a little lonely (but I was in Chester too!), not particularly missing UK, just miss friends and family. Have nice friends at work to keep me happy and smiling! Free time - Tend to go to Kratie every 3 weeks for rest (cable TV and good food), and to Phnom Penh every 6 weeks to shop, otherwise entertain myself & the neighbours in Chhlong.



*Party in Kratie photo...·
Joe is a wicked cook, Heng
is his business partner who
talks like a cockney, and the
waitresses are sweet girls. I*

This month would have been a lonely one for me as Judi is on home leave, but a savior arrived by the name of Pam (from Salford of all places!), working in the hospital here in Chhlong for a month or so, I helped her find a house to rent - 3 beds, balcony overlooking River, huge etc for \$130pm (75pound), conveniently 3 down from mine - so I have a beer and laughter buddy!! Its ace, the first night, I took Pam out to see the highlights of Chhlong - but despite living here 10 months, I don't go out much, so the highlights were all closed and we ended up eating in a Karaoke bar surrounded by the local families who do not have TV, so sit outside the restaurant to watch karaoke for their evenings entertainment - I don't think it was the greatest first impression of Chhlong!! Pam is a lively free spirited person who vows to liven up Chhlong in the next few weeks, something I am not certain whether to be pleased or concerned about?? I will let you know what happens!!! Pam is ex VSO, and knows absolutely everyone in Cambodia, so is a great person to know, and she has lots of good experience, which should surely help our sorry little hospital.

Its to rainy season now, so the weather is pretty much the same - hot and stuffy around 35 degrees, then there is suddenly strong winds, giving notice that a downpour is on its way - usually time to close the shutters before the heavens open - lasting anything from minutes to hours. The rain alters nothing here, no standstill at all, people are so used to it, they just don their motorbike rain capes and carry on doing what they do. The road to work has varying sized puddles to avoid each day, and the small riverside path I use that goes between some trees is getting badly eroded so, is likely to be impassable soon to motorbikes. I hate driving in mud, the bike slipping around all over the place, I just cling on, but at times have come a cropper - usually when I am on my way somewhere important - just to create the right impression you see, the foreign volunteer arriving covered in mud!! Although of late I have overcome several riding fears - I now ride on and off ferries (on small muddy planks of wood), and negotiate very muddy roads where many people come a cropper. This week the flooding was severe in the village that our TBA training was taking place, when I travelled out there I had to get a small ferry as part of the road was totally submerged, then two mud baths proved rather

tricky, but the bike was lovely and clean after riding through water a foot deep, it was after all this that a simple patch of mud had me covered and gave me a bruised leg - it was quite a funny scene, a little Khmer man running over to help me up, shouting down the road, "Help...we've got a foreigner in the mud here" so here are photos to show you - firstly the flooded road, then the ferry at \$0.25 a time, quite a money spinner for the man with the boat!



After the fiasco of losing my bag last month, now have a new mobile phone (its cool - it glows in the dark) and my credit card has finally reached me and I get the pleasure of speaking to a nice Irish man in Chester when I phone MBNA to validate it!! It's a good job that I decided not to go to Australia to meet up with my brother Gary and his fiancé Millie, as it would have been impossible without my card - and they didn't really want me crashing their holiday as after getting engaged in May, Gary has been working in Australia since June, so they need their time together, and it is me who chooses to work overseas afterall!

I am feeling very lucky lately as I have some wonderful friends back in the UK - despite our friendships now equated to an occasional letter or e-mail, they keep in touch, and keep me up to date with the important things going on. So the things I missed out on are - 3 important births - Sam, Jess and more recently Connor, the Christenings of Jess and Sam & Joe, the engagements my brother Gary to my best friend Melissa, and Barry & Kim's engagement, numerous wedding anniversaries (Nicky&Lee, Kaz&Jason, Alex&Fi, Yvonne&Kev), Sue's Hen night and forthcoming wedding to Ade, Sammy's winning streak in the Abingdon Amblers, Clare's new job, Claire's move to Spain, Mal & Ali's new farm and Peter's new girlfriend... and several other new romances that started and hopefully have not stopped!! My decision to stay another year from September (if PFD will have me!) will mean that I will miss out on some other important stuff -

Jeanette & Lee's wedding, Claire moving to Oz and Jayne's new baby, but I guess I knew that I would lose out on some good times when I made the decision to come here - so when I get back, there will be lots of catching up to do!! So I thank you all for keeping in touch, it means so very much to me and it will never be forgotten.

So as I say goodbye, I include a photo of two very special people to me - who in turn are very special to one another - Gary and Melissa. When they announced their engagement I wanted to get the first plane home, it was overwhelming that I was missing out on something so special, however

